

into the air and, against the opposite hill, it could be seen making a rather vertical stoop. When I was about to continue my breakfast it appeared again from low over the plains, swung a third time onto the same tree where it preened itself intensively. At about 08.30 hrs it took off again, and this time disappeared into the distant haze. Since the bird appeared so familiar with that particular tree I watched out for it next morning, but in vain.

I have seen Lanners and African Hobbies but there can be no doubt that the Ngulia bird was neither of these, but a Taita Falcon.

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Received 9 August 1977.

A GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *LOCUSTELLA NAEVIA* FROM KENYA

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A Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* was captured in a mist net at 06.45 hrs on 19 June 1977 on the Nguruman Escarpment. The netting site is located in very dense undergrowth at the edge of a swamp near the source of the Emungur-orkine River, at an elevation of 2000 m; the co-ordinates of the locality are 1°49'S., 35°55'E. The bird was ringed, described, photographed (Plate 1) and released.

The initial feelings were that the bird might be a cisticola, but this was discounted because of the rounded tail, lack of subterminal black spots on the tail feathers, long under-tail coverts with dark centres (end of tail-coverts approximately 12 mm from end of longest tail feather), streaked flanks, small streaks on neck and small feet. Furthermore, this bird's pointed wing was more typical of a Palaearctic migrant than any local species of warbler.

The following additional particulars were noted: weight 12.0 g, wing-length 65 mm; bill black above, horn below; iris dark brown; tail brown with light barring; tarsus and toes pink; no body, tail or wing moult. The tips of the primaries were neither new nor worn.

G.R. Cunningham-van Someren, D.J. Pearson, G.C. Backhurst and C.J. Mead (British Trust for Ornithology, Tring) were all shown the three photographs (reproduced in Plate 1) of the bird and were all in agreement with its identification as a Grasshopper Warbler.

Plate 1 clearly shows the pointed wing with the 2nd and 4th primaries almost equal in length, the 5th only marginally shorter, and the 3rd the longest. Plate 1c also shows the barred, rounded tail, and Plates 1a and 1b the long, streaked under-tail coverts, and small feet.

Of the other possible small streaked species of *Locustella*, the Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* is much smaller than the Nguruman bird; Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler *L. certhiola* and Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler *L. ochotensis* should both weigh well over 12 g, and have white at, or near, the tips of the tail feathers (Willimason 1968).

Wintering quarters and migratory routes of the Grasshopper Warbler have always been obscure (Moreau 1972). The Nguruman bird is the first to be recorded in East Africa. There are only two records of the species from Ethiopia (Ash & Watson 1974), and the Nguruman bird was from almost 1200 km south of the more southerly Ethiopian record (Koka, 8°27'N., 39°06'E.).



Plate 1. Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Nguruman, 19 June 1977
Photographs, V.C. and C.C. Fayad

It is remarkable that this first Kenya Grasshopper Warbler should have been captured in June, when virtually all Palaearctic passerines seem to be completely absent from East Africa.

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- Received 5 August 1977.

THE NEST AND EGGS OF THE CHESTNUT-FRONTED SHRIKE *PRIONOPS SCOPIFRONS*

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The Chestnut-fronted Shrike *Prionops scopifrons* is a characteristic species of bird parties in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest in coastal Kenya, especially in *Brachystegia* woodland, yet its eggs are still undescribed. Its nest has been described from both Amani (nominate race) and Sokoke (*kiriki*): the young at Amani were fed by three birds, in a nest built by several birds; but a bird incubating for more than three hours in Sokoke Forest was not visited at all (see Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1960, Britton & Britton 1971). Like other *Prionops* species, these are intensely sociable birds for which co-operative breeding is probably the norm. The three small young in a nest found in Sokoke Forest on 18 April 1977 were fed *Ochra* berries by the sitting bird and two other adults.

A nest with three fresh eggs was found in Sokoke Forest on 20 April 1977. These were very pale grey, tinged turquoise, liberally spotted and flecked lavender, brick and grey, especially in a ring 6-8 mm wide around the middle of each egg, closer to the blunt end. They measured (mm and g): 19.0x15.3, 2.3; 20.0x15.2, 2.4; 19.6x15.3, 2.4. The nest was a cup of grasses and thin bark, bound on the outside with cobwebs, 62x65 mm in diameter with an internal depth of 24 mm. All three Sokoke nests were in forks of branches of *Brachystegia spiciiformis* at 9 m, 4.5 m and 6.5 m above the ground. These three nests together with nine records of flying young fed by adults refer to egg-laying in each of the months January-July, peaking in April (6).

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960) state that the immature has the forehead blackish, uniform with the crown, and that the feathers of the alula have white tips. In our experience, the white tips near the alula are lost or very faint soon after fledging, so that they are not usually visible in recognizably immature birds which still retain the far more conspicuous and characteristic white area in the remiges, as well as a grey-black iris and yellow-orange bill and legs.

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Received 27 June 1977.